



[Walter Rodney, 1942 - 1980](#)

Walter Rodney

[Walter Rodney](#) was a revolutionary intellectual, born in Guyana, who is also eternally associated with the Dar-es-Salaam University school of African Revolutionary Writers, of which we have already featured two others in this series, namely Issa Shivji and Mahmood Mamdani.

Rodney was assassinated in his birthplace of Georgetown, on 13 June 1980, while running for office in Guyanese elections.

There is another biography of Walter Rodney [here](#).

The downloadable text linked below is a 4-page extract from the 44-page Chapter Six of Walter Rodney's "[How Europe Underdeveloped Africa](#)". The entire book can be downloaded in PDF format [by clicking here](#) (1069 KB).

More writings of Walter Rodney are available in the MIA [Walter Rodney Archive](#). In particular, the following five articles are recommended:

- [Tanzanian Ujamaa and Scientific Socialism](#), 1972
- [The African Revolution](#), 1972
- [Marxism and African Liberation](#), 1975
- [Class Contradictions in Tanzania](#), 1975
- [International Class Struggle in Africa, the Caribbean and America](#), 1975

“How Europe Underdeveloped Africa” made a huge impact when it was first published. It still continues to have legendary status among the African Revolutionary writings, and rightly so.

Rodney marshals the facts and the literature and he makes the arguments. He takes on Imperialist theories of “underdevelopment” head-on, and he overturns them.

Bourgeois theorists and academics, to the surprise of the naïve among us, proceeded to ignore Rodney after his death, and to revert to even more reactionary theories than before in their universities. Hence the importance of maintaining the currency of this literature, and keeping the dialogue around it fresh, in a virtual University, or Republic of Letters.

The late Walter Rodney was himself a scholar of the literature that we have attempted to revisit, and sample, in this CU African Revolutionary Writers Series. This is apparent from the

essays that are in the Walter Rodney Archive, linked above. Rodney is a very good example for us. Rodney gives his reflections on the historic place of many of our chosen African Revolutionary Writers, including Kwame Nkrumah and Julius Nyerere, as you will see if you read these essays.

Not only did he have his own ideas, but he also knew where they fitted in relation to past writers, and to contemporary writers. As an example of this, the essay “International Class Struggle in Africa, the Caribbean and America” is given, prepared like all the other files for printing as a booklet, in this case 20 pages.

This essay was written in preparation for a 6th Pan African Congress, in the tradition of the ones organised by the likes of W E B du Bois and George Padmore. The 6th Pan African Congress was supposed to take place in Tanzania. Whether it did, or not, the CU does not know. The essay is full of class analysis, and comparisons are drawn between African struggles and struggles in other places and times. Among other things, Walter Rodney wrote, 40 years ago, and 17 years after 1958:

“The African radicals of 1958 are by and large the incumbents in office today. The radicals of today lead at best an uncomfortable existence within African states, while some languish in prison or in exile. The present petty bourgeois regimes would look with disfavour at any organized programme which purported to be Pan-African without their sanction and participation.”

There is a great deal in this essay about the petty-bourgeois nature of the new independent regimes. Rodney writes that “the petty bourgeoisie during this early stage of the independence struggle constituted a stratum or fraction within the international bourgeoisie”.

The works of Walter Rodney can serve well to conclude our series, as a critical summing up by an eminent scholar as well as by a leader and revolutionary martyr.

Viva, Walter Rodney, Viva!

Viva all the African Revolutionary Writers, Viva!

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [Walter Rodney, Colonialism, System for Underdeveloping Africa, C6, 1973](#) and [International Class Struggle in Africa, the Caribbean and America, 1975](#).
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).